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South African National Gallery
Government Avenue Cape Town 8001

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Suid-Afrikaanse Nasionale Kunsmuseum
Goewermentslaan Kaapstad 8001

The Sense of Touch and Beyond

Some thoughts on art appreciation by the blind

In art and communication, fashion and entertainment, science and commerce the faculty of touch has become an area of expanding sensibility. Direct handling and intimate contact add a dimension to experience which seemingly is lacking in the remoter forms of awareness. Perhaps this is why sighted people often envy the blind for the sensitivity of touch they supposedly possess.

The blind have always relied on their sense of touch as a primary source of information. In creating opportunities for the blind to appreciate art the assumption is made that this tactile information may also have an aesthetic content, but it is an assumption open to challenge and therefore calling for critical examination.

Appearances

Every physical object has shape and size and bears certain relationships to other objects. These realities are known both by sight and touch, which means that sighted and blind people share a common knowledge of the identity and place of things.

In the case of the sighted person this information is disclosed at a distance and in detail during the course of effortless observation. Objects are seen in colour and constitute part of a perspective array. The view is panoramic and comprises a live situation in which the person acts with ease and confidence.

The blind person's experience is very different. For him the form and position of objects is not given at a glance, but becomes apparent through accidental or assisted discovery. The horizon of touch is immediate contact and the discrimination of such detail as belongs to touch demands continuous perceptual toil. In unfamiliar surroundings the presence of things is realized only on encounter.

Die Tassin en Verder

'n paar gedagtes oor kunswaardering deur blindes

In die kuns en kommunikasie, modes en vermaak, wetenskap en handel, het die vermoë om te tas 'n gebied van uitbreidende persepsie geword. Regstreekse hantering en intieme aanraking het aan ons ervaring 'n dimensie verleen wat blykbaar by die afstand-sintuie ontbreek. Miskien is dit die rede waarom siende persone dikwels die blindes hul sensitiewe tassin, wat hulle veronderstel is om te besit, beny.

Die blindes het hulle altyd verlaat op hul tassin as hoofbron van inligting. Wanneer daar vir blindes geleenthede geskep word om kuns te waardeer, word aanvaar dat hierdie voelbare inligting ook estetiese inhoud kan hê, maar dit is 'n veronderstelling wat aanvegbaar is en dus kritiese ondersoek vereis.

Die voorkoms van dinge

Elke fisieke voorwerp het vorm en grootte en staan in 'n sekere verhouding tot ander voorwerpe. Hierdie werklikhede is deur sowel gesig en betasting bekend, wat beteken dat siende en blinde mense 'n gemeenskaplike kennis van die identiteit en plasing van dinge deel.

In die geval van 'n siende persoon word hierdie inligting op 'n afstand en in detail opgemerk in die loop van waarneming sonder inspanning. Voorwerpe word in kleur gesien en maak deel van 'n perspektiewe bestel uit. Die uitsig is panoramies en behels 'n lewende situasie waarin die persoon met gemak en vertroue optree.

Die blinde se ervaring is heeltemal anders. Vir hom word die vorm en plasing van voorwerpe nie met 'n oogopslag gegee nie, maar word eers duidelik ná toevallige of aangeleide ontdekking. Die horizon van betasting is onmiddellike kontak en die onderskeiding van die detail wat tot die tassin behoort, vereis voortdurende perseptuele

If they are examined cursorily impressions are partial. Even after detailed investigation, the vividness of tactile experience soon fades as objects are transformed into the obstacles and utensils of a familiar environment. In such a setting sensitivity to tactile qualities has to be a deliberate project.

The scope of touch

While some individuals might be inclined to stress the impoverishment of sensory experience produced by a lack of sight, it is far more helpful to draw attention to the intensification of tactile awareness which may result. A developed sense of touch, aided by intelligent movement of the hands and body, is the basis of exploration.

By feeling the planes and volumes of a structure and getting to know the shape, size, and arrangement of its parts, the blind person easily grasps the grosser detail of design. Texture adds variety, allowing him to appreciate the raw state of untreated surfaces of the effects of skilled craftsmanship. Through the application of pressure sensations of hardness or softness, rigidity or elasticity are elicited. Other peculiarly tactile qualities such as temperature, stickiness, slipperiness, soapiness, and wetness not only add to the range of sensations, but enable the blind person to identify materials, as in the earthy warmth of wood or the slippery coldness of steel.

The subtle gradation of all these qualities and their infinite combinations offer endless possibilities of experience. Their full appreciation is a pleasure belonging uniquely to the realm of touch.

A vocabulary of touch

The question arises whether tactile data only convey factual information or whether other kinds of messages might be communicated. For instance, might it not be possible for the artist consciously to employ tactile values in representing his thoughts and impressions?

To the extent that certain tactile and visual qualities correlate — the qualities of form and of texture, for example — the meaning to

inspanning. In 'n onbekende omgewing word die aanwesigheid van dinge slegs na fisieke ontmoeting besef. As hulle vlugtig ondersoek word, is die indrukke onvolledig. Selfs ná deeglike ondersoek ver- vaag die skerpheid van gevoelservaring spoedig namate die voor- werpe in die struikelblokke en werktuie van 'n bekende omgewing oorgaan. In so 'n situasie moet gevoeligheid vir taseienskappe doelbewus aangekweek word.

Die omvang van aanraking

Terwyl sommige persone geneig mag wees om klem te lê op die verarming van sintuiglike ervaring wat deur die afwesigheid van ge- sig meegebring word, is dit baie nuttiger om die aandag te vestig op die verhewiging van betastingsbewustheid wat daarop mag volg. 'n Ontwikkelde tassin, aangehelp deur intelligente beweging van die hande en die liggaam, is die grondslag van verkenning.

Deur die vlakke en volumes van 'n struktuur te betas en die vorm, grootte en rangskikking van die onderdele te leer ken, begryp die blinde maklik die algemene besonderhede van die ontwerp. Tek- stuur voeg verskeidenheid daarby en stel hom in staat om die onge- skonde toestand van onbehandelde oppervlaktes van die uitwerking van geskoolde vakmanskap te onderskei. Deur drukking toe te pas, word sensasies van hardheid of sagtheid, onbuigsaamheid of elasti- siteit ontlok. Ander besondere gevoelshoedanighede soos tempera- tuur, klewerigheid, gladheid, seperigheid en natheid verbreed nie slegs die reeks sensasies nie, maar stel die blinde in staat om materiale te identifiseer, soos in die grondagtige warmte van hout of die gladde kilheid van staal.

Die subtiele nuanses van al hierdie hoedanighede en hul onein- dige kombinasies bied eindelose ervaringsmoontlikhede, en die volle waardering daarvan is 'n genot wat uniek tot die tassin behoort.

Die taal van aanraking

Die vraag ontstaan of tasbare gegewens slegs feitlike inligting oor-

blind and sighted observers may coincide. More often, though, tactile qualities are an incidental consideration and are not purposely embodied in a work of art. This does not mean that artists may not on occasion intuitively invoke tactile effects to reinforce a visual statement. This is clearly the case. But the challenge of developing a purely tactile vocabulary and of creating works of art primarily intended for appreciation by touch has not yet been attempted seriously, even though there are sufficient grounds to warrant such a project.

Of course, specific examples are needed, and these are not entirely lacking in the visual arts. Think of the rounded forms of voluptuousness and the attenuated forms of suffering, or of the monotony of a featureless surface, the restlessness of a broken plane, and the cruelty of a jagged edge.

Fragmentation and construction

In the light of what has been said about the sense of touch and the possibilities of a generic vocabulary, the fundamental assumption that tactile information may have an aesthetic content seems justified. An adequate interpretation of the tactile elements in a work of art would have to be associated with a sophisticated level of art appreciation, but whatever the intellectual attainments of the blind individual might be, the problem of his ability to perceive a work of art in terms of total design still remains. He may, for example, touch every part of a sculpture in turn, but how is he to gather these loose impressions into a unitary conception of the whole? Is his awareness perhaps only of a series of his own movements in the course of which a range of sensations is interrelated?

If this were the case blind people would hardly display any enthusiasm to visit art galleries and would probably find great difficulty in applying aesthetic concepts meaningfully. But the success of art programmes for the blind points to a form of experience far more profound than mere schematization. Although the techniques em-





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dra en of ander soorte boodskappe meegedeel kan word. Is dit nie miskien vir die kunstenaar moontlik om tasbare waardes te gebruik om sy gedagtes en indrukke oor te dra nie?

In die mate waarin tasbare en sigbare hoedanighede korreleer — byvoorbeeld die hoedanighede van vorm en van tekstuur — kan die betekenis by blinde en siende waarnemers ooreenstem. Meer dikwels is tasbare eienskappe 'n toevallige oorweging wat nie doelbewus in 'n kunswerk beliggaam is nie. Dit beteken nie dat kunstenaars nie by geleentheid intuïtief tasbare effekte se hulp kan inroep om die visuele stelling te versterk nie. Dit is beslis so. Maar die uitdaging om 'n suiwer tasbare woordeskat te ontwikkel en om kunswerke te skep wat primêr vir waardering deur aanraking bedoel is, is nog nie ernstig aangedurf nie, al is daar ook voldoende gronde om so 'n onderneming te regverdig.

Besondere voorbeelde is natuurlik nodig, en dit ontbreek nie geheel en al in die visuele kunste nie. Dink aan die rondings van sinlikheid en die dun vorms van lyding, of aan die saaiheid van 'n eentonige oppervlak, die rusteloosheid van 'n gebroke vlak en die wreedheid van 'n gekepte rand.

Fragmentasie en konstruksie

In die lig van wat reeds gesê is oor die tassin en sy moontlike generiese betekenis, lyk dit geregverdig om te aanvaar dat tasbare inligting 'n estetiese inhoud kan hê. 'n Toereikende vertolking van die tasbare elemente van 'n kunswerk sal hand aan hand met 'n gesofistikeerde vlak van kunswaardering moet gaan, maar wat die intellektuele prestasie van die blinde individu ook al mag wees, bly die probleem van sy vermoë om 'n kunswerk in terme van totale ontwerp te sien, nog altyd daar. Hy kan byvoorbeeld elke onderdeel van 'n beeldhouwerk beurtelings betas, maar hoe moet hy hierdie losse indrukke tot 'n eenheidskonsepsie verwerk? Is sy bewustheid beperk bloot tot 'n reeks eie bewegings in die loop waarvan 'n aantal sensasies onderling verbind word?

ployed by blind people viewing art have not yet been studied closely, it would appear that two processes are simultaneously at work. At one moment the fingers are seen to be examining a particular part of the work in minute detail. At another the hands are seen moving to and fro as the size and overall structure are gauged. These two approaches — fragmentation and construction, analysis and synthesis — alternate constantly and it is their effective integration that ultimately determines the blind person's conception of any object.

Imaginative enrichment

But the significance of art goes beyond its sensory impact. Not only do various tactile impressions coalesce in the total conception of a work, but this basic awareness is supplemented by cultural connotations, the experience of the past, the evidence of the remaining senses, and the descriptions given by other people as a range of associations and meanings is evoked representing the blind person's distinctive response. Rather than a passive perception, his appreciation of art is an imaginative enrichment of the primary information of touch.

In this way the blind person brings an emphasis to bear which has generally been neglected in the visual arts. Might the wider recognition of tactile values not also prove an enrichment to those whose experience of art is limited by sight.

WILLIAM ROWLAND *Director*
SA National Council for the Blind

Was dit so, sou blindes nouliks geesdriftig wees om kunsgalerye te besoek en sou hulle dit waarskynlik baie moeilik vind om estetiese konsepsies sinvol toe te pas. Maar die welslae van kunsprogramme vir blindes dui op 'n tipe ervaring wat baie intenser as blote skematisasie is. Hoewel die tegnieke wat blindes toepas om na kunswerke te kyk, nog nie van nader bestudeer is nie, lyk dit tog of daar twee prosesse is wat tegelykertyd aan die gang is. Eers sien ons hoe die vingers 'n besondere deel van die werk in fyn besonderhede ondersoek. Dan sien ons hoe die hande heen en weer beweeg terwyl die omvang en geheelstruktuur bepaal word. Hierdie twee benaderings — fragmentasie en konstruksie, analise en sintese — wissel mekaar gedurig af, en dit is hul doeltreffende integrasie wat uiteindelik die blinde se konsepsie van enige voorwerp bepaal.

Verbeeldingryke verryking

Maar die beduidenis van die kuns strek ver buite die sintuiglike waarneming daarvan. Nie net is daar 'n samesmelting van tasbare indrukke in die totale konsepsie van 'n werk nie, maar hierdie basiese bewustheid word aangevul deur kulturele konnotasie, ervaring uit die verlede, die getuigenis van die oorblywende sintuie en die beskrywings van andere, namate 'n reeks assosiasies en betekenis te voorskyn geroep word wat die blinde se kenmerkende reaksie verteenwoordig. Eerder as 'n passiewe persepsie, is sy waardering van kuns 'n verbeeldingryke verryking van die primêre inligting van betasting.

Op hierdie wyse bring die blinde 'n nadruk na vore wat oor die algemeen in die visuele kunste verwaarloos word. Kan die wyer erkenning van tasbare waardes nie moontlik 'n verryking blyk te wees vir diegene wie se ervaring van die kuns deur hul vermoë om te kan sien, beperk is nie?

WILLIAM ROWLAND *Direkteur*
S.A. Nasionale Raad vir Blindes



The Touch Gallery

For the past ten years specific exhibitions accessible to both the blind and the sighted have been organised at the South African National Gallery.

The idea of making provision for visits by the blind to an art gallery was enthusiastically taken up by a former director, Prof. Matthys Bokhorst, who had heard during his travels abroad of a tactile exhibition mounted by the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague. The inspiration for this was later traced to Charles Stanford and the Mary Duke Biddle Gallery for the Blind at the North Carolina Museum of Art. It was an exciting challenge in a field that even today has not been fully explored.

Our first exhibition in November 1967 was held in the water-colour room of the main gallery and consisted of a number of sculptures carefully chosen to provide varying tactile experiences. All were of a manageable size, none too large to be encompassed by outstretched arms, none too small for tactile recognition. Each exhibit had clear affinities with realism. The works were safely grouped in thematic clusters. A showcase containing some sculptors' tools and materials allowed for discussions of the artist's commitment to his chosen medium as well as his work. Blind adults were conducted on guided tours of the exhibition by invitation. The response by the blind demanded recognition and action.

At the time of this venture *Scultura Italiana*, a large exhibition of contemporary Italian sculpture, was also on view in the gallery. Permission for the touching of selected works was granted by the Rembrandt van Rijn Art Foundation and this provided a valuable opportunity for exposing the blind visitors to sculptures not carefully chosen with the blind in view.

Die Tasgalery

Vir die afgelope tien jaar reeds organiseer die Suid-Afrikaanse Nasionale Kunsmuseum spesiale tentoonstellings wat vir sowel blindes as siendes toeganklik is.

Die idee om voorsiening te maak vir besoeke deur blinde persone aan 'n kunsmuseum is afkomstig van 'n voormalige direkteur, prof. Matthys Bokhorst, wat op 'n reis oorsee kennis gemaak het met 'n tas-tentoonstelling in die Haagse Gemeentemuseum. Die inspirasie hiervoor is verskaf deur Charles Stanford en die Mary Duke Biddle Gallery for the Blind in die North Carolina Museum of Art. Dit was 'n opwindende uitdaging op 'n terrein wat selfs vandag nog nie geheel en al verken is nie.

Ons eerste tentoonstelling in November 1967 is gehou in die akwarellekabinet van die hoofgebou, en het bestaan uit 'n aantal beelde wat met sorg gekies is om verskillende taktiele ervarings te verskaf. Al die beelde was so gekies dat hulle nie te groot was om deur uitgestrekte arms omvat te word en nie te klein om deur betasting verken te kan word nie. Al die stukke was duidelik realisties van aard. Die werke is veilig op tematiiese wyse gegroepeer. 'n Vertoonkas met beeldhouerswerktuie en -materiaal is gebruik vir besprekings van die kunstenaar se betrokkenheid teenoor sy gekose medium asook van sy werk. Volwasse blindes het op uitnodiging rondleidings deur die tentoonstelling ontvang. Die blindes se geesdriftige reaksies het bewys dat daar beslis met die projek voortgegaan moes word.

Ten tye van hierdie eerste poging was daar ook 'n tentoonstelling van hedendaagse Italiaanse beeldhouerkuns, *Scultura Italiana*, in die Kunsmuseum te sien. Die Kunsstigting Rembrandt van Rijn het toestemming verleen tot die aanraak van 'n aantal werke deur blinde

The validity of Helen Keller's statement that 'the blind are just like anybody else except they do not see with their eyes' was proved. A blind person's unimpaired senses are efficient and refined through constant use, increased effort and enforced concentration. His lack of a preconceived visual yardstick is refreshing. He was found to be a perceptive and stimulating gallery visitor.

Viktor Lowenfeld in his wide experiments correlating the art of normal and weak sighted children found both groups to use, up to a certain stage, a similar approach to formal expression. He concluded that he was dealing with 'phenomena that, independently of visual experience, follow laws of their own'. In analysing practical work he discovered, on one hand, visualisers, i.e. those who build a synthesis of numerous partial impressions from without in seeking to bring the outer world closer to the self and, on the other hand, those who by haptic perception, i.e. perception by tactile/bodily sensations, project a unified conception of an inner world — amongst both the sighted and the blind.

Optical experience is constructed out of numerous partial impressions which by a mental act fuse into a single image. Grouping: a computer-like assessment and storage of perceptual data, and closure: the completion of a fragmentary impression, are psychological phenomena that hold true of both visual and tactile perception.

Visual perception is not our first and most important avenue for exploring our environment. A baby must touch and if possible taste. The eye must be taught to see what the hand feels or the mind or heart knows. In experiments where lenses which invert the retinal image are worn, the subject has been able to adjust to them within eight days.

That an approach to art appreciation through an emphasis on senses other than visual is valid for the sighted too became obvious. The 'sense arrogant' who look without seeing can only gain through

besoekers, wat 'n waardevolle geleentheid geskep het om hulle te laat kennis maak met beeldhoukuns wat nie spesifiek vir blindes uitgesoek was nie.

In die omvattende proefnemings waarin Viktor Lowenfeld die kun's van normale en swaksiende kinders gekorreleer het, was dit sy bevinding dat albei groepe tot op 'n sekere stadium 'n eenderse benadering tot vormuitdrukking toepas. Hy het daaruit afgelei dat hy te doen gehad het met 'fenomene wat ongeag visuele gewaarwording hul eie wette volg'. In sy ontledings van praktiese werk van sowel siendes en blindes het hy aan die een kant 'visualiseerders' onderskei, d.w.s. diegene wat d.m.v. 'n sintese van verskillende gedeeltelike indrukke van buite probeer om die wêreld om hulle heen nader aan die self te bring; en aan die ander kant dié wat liggaamlik en deur die tassin waarneem en sodoende 'n geïntegreerde begrip van 'n innerlike wêreld na buite projekteer.

Optiese gewaarwording is saamgestel uit 'n hele aantal deelindrukke wat deur 'n verstandelike daad tot 'n geheelbeeld versmelt. Die groepering: 'n komperagtige beoordeling en bewaring van waarnemingsfeite, en die sluiting: die voltooiing van 'n fragmentêre indruk, is sielkundige verskynsels wat vir sowel visuele as vir taktiele waarneming geld. Visuele waarneming is nie die eerste en belangrikste manier waarop ons ons omgewing kan verken nie. 'n Baba kan aanraak en indien moontlik proe. Die oog moet geleer word om te sien wat die hand voel of die verstand of hart weet. In proefnemings waarby lense die netvliesbeeld van 'n persoon onderstebo keer, leer hy binne agt dae om dit weer regop te sien.

Die proefneming het die geldigheid bewys van Helen Keller se bewering dat 'die blindes net soos ander mense is behalwe dat hulle nie met hul oë sien nie'. Die blinde se ongeskonde sintuie is doeltreffend en skerp as gevolg van intensiewe gebruik, verhoogde inspanning en gedwonge konsentrasie. Hy word ook nie gepla deur enige bevooroordeelde visuele maatstawwe nie. Hy het geblyk om

this approach. A conscious extension to sensory awareness and emotional as well as intellectual response must deepen the appreciation of a work of art.

From 1967 to 1971 an annual tactile exhibition was held at the South African National Gallery. In 1970 the Rembrandt van Rijn Art Foundation made their Barlach/Kollwitz exhibition available for tactile exploration at the S.A. National Gallery, the Johannesburg Art Gallery and the Pretoria Art Museum. During these years the annual attendance of various blind groups grew steadily.

The Touch Gallery, consisting of three rooms in a building adjacent to the main gallery opened in 1972 with the exhibition LINK. The availability of a permanent exhibition space as well as an area for practical work provided the facilities essential for constant experimenting. The original concept was able to expand and grow. Different groups began to visit the Touch Gallery on a regular basis. By 1973 over 65% of the blind community in the Cape had visited the Touch Gallery.

The flexible base essential to Touch Gallery thinking is reflected by the nature of recent exhibitions. LINK explored the aesthetic correlation between works of art, manufactured items and natural objects. In a grouping of totem images the following could be found: steel press blanks from a foundry, a cast iron washing line hoist, cork from the Mediterranean Oak, a polished bronze totem pole by Richard Wake, an antique wooden Dogon figure and Antonie De Vinck's ceramic Large Totem.

On the practical side subjects linking man and machine and man and nature were introduced.

The following year DUO combined music and sculpture. Prof. Gunter Pulvermacher, then Dean of the College of Music at the University of Cape Town, selected musical extracts to make up a background tape as well as to illustrate a recorded introduction. Specific use was thus made of an additional aid to sensory perception for

'n ontvanklike en stimulerende museumbesoekeer te wees.

Dat 'n benadering tot kunswaardering deur ander sintuie as die visuele, ook vir siende persone geldig kan wees, het al gou duidelik geword. Die 'sintuiglik arrogante' mense wat kyk sonder om te sien, kan baie hiervan leer. 'n Bewustelike verbreding van sintuiglike bewusheid en emosionele en verstandelike reaksie kan nie nalaat om die begrip vir 'n kunswerk te verdiep nie.

Van 1967 tot 1971 is jaarliks 'n tastentoonstelling in die Suid-Afrikaanse Nasionale Kunsmuseum gehou. In 1970 het die Kunststiging Rembrandt van Rijn sy Barlach/Kollwitz-tentoonstelling beskikbaar gestel vir ondersoek met die tassintuie, nie net in die S.A. Kunsmuseum nie maar ook in die Johannesburgse en Pretoriase Kunsmuseums. In hierdie jare het die jaarlikse besoeksyfers vir groepe blindes geleidelik gestyg.

Die eintlike Tasgalery, drie spesiaal vir hierdie doel bestemde kamers in 'n gebou langs die hoofgebou van die Kunsmuseum, is in 1972 geopen met die tentoonstelling SKAKEL. Noudat 'n permanente tentoonstellingsruimte en ook 'n kamer vir praktiese werk beskikbaar was, het die geleentheid bestaan vir verdere proefnemings, en kon die oorspronklike konsep uitgebou word. Verskeie groepe het die Tasgalery op gesette tye begin besoek. Teen 1973 het reeds 65% van alle blindes in die Kaap die Tasgalery besoek.

Die aard van die tentoonstellings wat die laaste jare gehou is, toon hoe rekbaar die Tasgalery se opvatting van sy taak is. In SKAKEL is die estetiese wisselwerking tussen kunswerke, fabrieksprodukte en natuurvoorwerpe ondersoek. In 'n groep totem-agtige objekte kon die volgende aangetref word:

staalgietvorms van 'n gietery; 'n gietyster-optrekpaaal vir 'n wasgoedlyn; 'n stuk kurk van 'n akkerboom uit die Middellandse Seegebied; 'n totempaal van gepoleerde brons deur Richard Wake; 'n antieke Dogon-beeld van hout; en Antonie De Vinck se groot keramiektotem.

both the sighted and the blind and an attempt was made to correlate sensory stimuli received through touch and through hearing. A large bronze 'Mother and Twins' by Käthe Kollwitz, made contrapuntal use of full maternal circular forms. Giacometti's delicate graphic approach to the features on the flattened face plane of his bronze 'Portrait de Mon Père' was as lyrical as the use of the harpsichord in extracts from the Anna Magdalena Bach Book that formed part of the background tape.

During DUO the first large group of Xhosa adults (they now come on a monthly basis) visited the Gallery. To break the ice, to overcome language problems and to introduce the thematic relationship of music and sculpture these visitors were asked to sing. By this time they were seated and had their blocks of clay in front of them.

The leader began in a single high-pitched melody line. Gradually the fabric of a rich typically African melody was woven as bass and soprano joined in various harmonies. The singers were totally involved in their song. Bodies emphasised rhythmic balance and counter balance and faces indicated the content of their song. The warp intermingled with the woof and the melody was everywhere.

Fingers were not idle during the song. Properties of clay were explored and small objects began to emerge. Animals, figures and a basket containing open mouthed flower-like forms which were later explained as musical sounds, were amongst the first completed items.

The validity of this approach was dramatically proved by one of the totally blind visitors, James Ndileka, who rendered his own interpretation of the sculptures in song. A plaintive introspective hum described Barlach's 'Flute Player' while Richard Wake's 'Corrugations' was summed up by a rousing song which had a strong downbeat and was accompanied by sporadic irrepressible hand clapping.

Practical clay work on this broad theme ranged from depictions of a human form in relation to a musical instrument for example 'Play-

Aan die praktiese kant was daar onderwerpe op die tentoonstelling te sien wat die mens met die masjiene en die mens met die natuur verbind.

Die volgende jaar is op die tentoonstelling DUO die beeldhoukuns in verband gebring met die musiek. Prof. Gunter Pulvermacher, die destydse dekaan van die Musiekkollege van die Universiteit Kaapstad, het musiek-passages uitgekies vir 'n band met agtergrondmusiek en ook om 'n op band opgenome inleiding te illustreer. Sodoende is gebruik gemaak van 'n bykomende hulpmiddel tot sintuiglike waarneming vir sowel die siendes as die blindes, en is geprobeer om die sintuiglike stimuli ontvang deur die tassin en die gehoor te korreleer. 'n Groot bronsfiguur deur Käthe Kollwitz, 'Moeder en Tweeling', het kontrapuntale gebruik gemaak van volle, moederlike sirkelvorms. Giacometti se delikate grafiese hantering van die trekke op die effens afgeplatte gesigsvlak van die bronswerk 'Portrait de mon Père' was net so liries as die klawesimbelmusiek uit die noteboek van Anna Magdalena Bach wat as agtergrondmusiek gebruik is.

Dit was ook tydens DUO dat die eerste groep Khôsa-volwassenes die Tasgalery besoek het (tans kom hulle op 'n maandelikse basis). Ten einde die ys te breek, die taalprobleem te oorkom en om die tematiese verband tussen musiek en beeldhoukuns in te lei, is hulle gevra om te sing. Hulle het toe reeds aan 'n tafel gesit met hompe klei voor hulle. Die leier het begin sing in 'n hoë, melodiese lyn. Geleidelik het ook die bas en sopraan met verskillende harmonieë ingeval en 'n ryke weefsel van geluid begin spin. Die sangers het geheel daarin opgegaan. Hul liggame het die ritme benadruk en op hul gesigte kon die inhoud van die lied afgelees word. Die geluid het die lug gevul. Terwyl hulle sing, het ook hul vingers nie stil gebly nie. Die klei is betas en voorwerpies het vorm begin aanneem. Diere, figure en 'n mandjie met oop blomagtige vorms (later verduidelik as musikale geluide) was onder die eerste werke wat voltooi is.



ing a guitar' and 'Pianist', to abstracted portrayals of pure musical form for example 'Trumpet Music' and 'Symphony'. Artistic ingenuity was given free reign in the invention of 'Music Machines' in which shapes suggested sounds, and in the seeking of solutions to a broad 'Choir' theme; both three dimensional as in the depiction of open mouthed forms in musical relationship, and two dimensional as in a shallow bas relief interpretation of choral textures, lines and rhythmic interdependence.

Practical sessions built around the playing of different instruments, recorded birdsong or rhythmic body movement have led to new investigations of line, texture and form.

Works have been created to meet the specific needs of the Touch Gallery. In both INVOLVEMENT (1974) and QUEST (1976) selected senior sculpture students from the Michaelis School of Fine Art designed works that called for active participation by the visitor.

During INVOLVEMENT, sea sand covered the gallery floor linking each exhibit in a tactile as well as a visual way and forcing visitors (especially those who agreed to discard their shoes) to become immediately aware of their environment. Sensory antennae were alerted and visitors were able to take advantage of an exhibition in which the exhibits provided starting points that could be experienced when discussing form, balance, line, textures; in other words the language of the artist. Johannes Itten advocated the building up of form by actual experience during his teaching days at the Bauhaus. Here we could do just this. A steel construction of a circular cage within a cage called 'Circular Railings to Walk Through' led to discussions of the symbolism of a circle, the beauty of the complete form, and in this case, the invincibility of a form with no beginning and no end. A 'sitting space' and a 'lying space' allowed for a conscious experience of the negative and for considering the statement by Lao-Tse that 'the material contains utility, the immaterial contains essence'.

Die geldigheid van hierdie benadering is op dramatiese wyse aangetoon deur een van die geheel blinde besoekers, James Ndileka, wat sy eie vertolking van die beelde gesing het. 'n Klaaglike, bespieëlende geneurie het Barlach se 'Fluitspeler' beskryf, en Richard Wake se 'Golwings' is opgesom met 'n opwindende lied met 'n sterk ritme en begelei deur ononderdrukbare handegeklap.

Praktiese kleiwerk op hierdie tema het gewissel van weergawes van die menslike liggaam in verhouding tot musiekinstrumente, soos 'Kitaarspel' en 'Pianis', tot geabstraheerde vergestaltungen van suiwer musikale vorm, soos 'Trompetmusiek' en 'Simfonie'. Artistieke vindingrykheid is die vrye hand gelaat in die versin van 'Musiek-masjiene' waarin vorms geluide suggereer, en in die vind van oplossings vir die wye tema 'Koor'. Dit kon sowel drie-dimensionaal wees, soos in die skep van oop vorms in musikale verhoudings, as twee-dimensionaal, soos in 'n vertolking in bas-reliëf van koorteksture, -lyne en ritmiese wisselwerkings.

Die praktiese werk, opgebou rondom musiek van verskillende instrumente, opnames van voëlgeluide of ritmiese liggaamsbewegings, het gelei tot hernude studie van lyn, tekstuur en vorm.

Soms word kunswerke gemaak vir die spesifieke doel van die Tasgalery. Sowel in BETROKKENHEID (1974) as in SOEKTOG (1976) het geselekteerde senior-studente in die beeldhoukuns van die Michaelis-kunsskool werke geskep wat die besoekers tot aktiewe deelname uitgenooi het.

Tydens BETROKKENHEID was die galeryvloer met seesand bedek, wat die toonstukke sowel voelbaar as sigbaar verbind het en die besoekers (veral diegene wat hul skoene uitgetrek het) onmiddellik van hulle omgewing bewus laat word het. Hul gevoel-sintuie is verskerp sodat hulle ten volle kon deel hê aan 'n tentoonstelling waarin die toonstukke ervaar kon word as uitgangspunte vir besprekings oor vorm, ewewig, lyn, tekstuur, oftewel die taal van die kunstenaar.

A controlled textural path with sections containing bird seed as slippery as quicksilver, solidly resistant sawdust, river rounded pebbles, sharply brittle shells, to name a few, provided sensations received through bare feet which were then assimilated and related in discussions.

Cecil Skotnes, Bill Davis, Eduard Ladan and Jill Joubert have been inspired to create and present works of art to the Touch Gallery. These form the nucleus of a collection of essentially tactile works that it is hoped will grow to complement the main body of works owned by the S.A. National Gallery. An awareness of conservation problems dictates careful handling of the works and a permanent collection ensures that loans from other sources are temporary.

This year the CERAMIC SCULPTURE EXHIBITION has given students from the University of Natal as well as free-lance artists a definite direction for the exploration of tactile values. The exhibition consists of selected works entered in the competition organised by the Touch Gallery. Juliette Armstrong's 'Body Piece' and Garth Claassen's 'Pylon Head' are joint prize-winners in the Open Section. 'Bone structured Landscape' by Shane Richards won the prize in the Student Section. These works become part of the permanent collection of the Touch Gallery. The generosity of Barbara Borberek, Lesley Ann Hoets, Hannatjie van der Wat and Spies Venter who have also donated entries to the collection is greatly appreciated.

Theoretical discussions in front of works of art are reinforced by concepts explored in practical creative work. The final product is not an end in itself. Personal terms of reference are established and broadened in a direct confrontation with various creative media. We have explored the potential and limitations of working with clay, paper, board, boxes, papier mache, polystyrene blocks, wire, string, wax, plaster of Paris, soapstone, woven materials, nails, dried natural objects and wood. An approach to painting is soon to be investigated.

Johannes Itten het destyds, toe hy by die Bauhaus klasgegee het, getoon hoe vorm opgebou kan word deur middel van eintlike gewaarwordings. Hier het ons die geleentheid om dit te ervaar. 'n Van staal geboude ronde kooi binne 'n kooi, 'Sirkelvormige Traliewerk om deur te Loop', het aanleiding gegee tot gesprekke oor die simboliek van die sirkel, die skoonheid van die volmaakte vorm en, in hierdie geval, die onoorwinlikheid van 'n vorm sonder begin en sonder einde.

In 'n 'Sitruimte' en 'n 'Lêruimte' kon negatiewe ruimte ervaar word en die bewering van Lao-Tse oorweeg word dat 'die stoflike nuttigheid bevat, die onstoflike wesenskap'.

'n Tekstuurpad, bestaande uit seksies bestrooi met glipperige voëlsaad, voetvaste saagsel, rondgeslypte rivierklippies, skerp en broos skulpe en ander materiale, het 'n mens deur middel van die kaal voete gewaarwordings laat ondergaan wat daarna onderling bespreek en vergelyk is.

Kunstenaars soos Cecil Skotnes, Bill Davis, Eduard Ladan en Jill Joubert is geïnspireer om kunswerke spesiaal vir die Tasgalery te skep. Hierdie werke vorm die kern van 'n versameling hoofsaaklik taktiele werke wat ons hoop om op te bou as aanvulling tot die hoofversameling van die Suid-Afrikaanse Nasionale Kunsmuseum. As gevolg van bewaringsoorwegings moet die werke versigtig hanteer word sodat dit nie nodig is om items uit ander bronne langdurig in bruikleen te hou nie.

Die TENTOONSTELLING VAN KERAMIEK-BEELDHOUKUNS het hierdie jaar studente van die Universiteit van Natal asook selfstandige kunstenaars 'n kans gegee om spesifieke taktiele moontlikhede te ondersoek. Die tentoonstelling bestaan uit gekeurde inskrywings vir die kompetisie wat deur die Tasgalery gereël is. Juliette Armstrong se 'Liggaamsvorme' en Garth Claassen se 'Spantoring' is tesame prysweners in die Oop Afdeling, terwyl Shane Richards se 'Been-gestruktureerde landskap' die prys in die



Studente-afdeling wen. Die werk word dus opgeneem in die permanente versameling van die Tasgalery. Die edelmoedigheid van Barbara Borberek, Lesley Ann Hoets, Hannatjie van der Wat en Spies Venter wat ook inskrywings aan die versameling geskenk het, word hoog op prys gestel.

Die teoretiese diskussies oor bepaalde kunswerke word geruggesteun deur ideë wat verkry is uit praktiese skeppende werk. Die uiteindelijke produk is nie 'n doel op sigself nie. Persoonlike verwysingsterme word daargestel en uitgebrei in 'n regstreekse konfrontasie met verskillende kreatiewe mediums. Ons het die moontlikhede en beperkings ondersoek van klei, papier, karton, dose, papier maché, polistireenblokke, draad, tou, was, gips, seepsteen, geweefde stowwe, spykers, gedroogde natuurvoorwerpe en hout. 'n Benadering tot skilder sal binnekort ondersoek word.

Tydens die tentoonstelling van werke deur Käthe Kollwitz en Ernst Barlach, toe die gesprekke gewoonlik om die begrip 'ekspressionisme' gedraai het, is die deelnemers aangemoedig om in hulle kleimodellering twee figure in emosionele verbondenheid weer te gee. So het werke soos 'Geheime', 'Moeder wat haar kind troos' en 'Die terugkeer van die verlore seun' ontstaan.

Die gereelde praktiese onderwysers van die Tasgalery is ten volle opgelei en werksaam in die kunsonderwys van vandag. Noodsaaklike opvoedkundige elemente soos aanbieding en kommunikasievermoë moet hulle kan verenig met 'n vindingryke benadering wat kan lei tot onafhanklike skeppende bedrywigheid op 'n terrein wat nog so nuut is dat besliste riglyne nog nie daarvoor bestaan nie. Twee lede van die groep onderwysers tans by die Tasgalery betrokke, is suster Doreen O.H.P. — wat die leeuudeel van die onderwys behartig — en August J. Hopley, hoof van die Kinderkuns-sentrum Zonnebloem.

Die deelname deur blindes het nog steeds gegroei. Die eerste groepie volwassenes wat in 1969 gereeld bymekaar begin kom het,

During the exhibition of work by Käthe Kollwitz and Ernst Barlach when discussions used Expressionism as a pivotal point, clay modelling of subjects using two or more figures in an emotive bond was encouraged. For example 'Secrets', 'Mother comforting child' and 'Return of the prodigal son'.

Regular practical teachers at the Touch Gallery are fully trained and caught up in the mainstream of art education. They need to combine those educational essentials of presentation and inspiration with an inventive approach that can lead to independent creative activity in a field still new enough for there to be no definite guide-lines. Sister Doreen O.H.P. who is the teacher most involved with visitors to the Touch Gallery and August J. Hopley, Principal of the Zonnebloem Children's Art Centre, are two of the members of an active teaching body.

Full participation by the blind has made the venture grow. The first small group of adults who began to meet regularly in 1969 paved the way for the eleven groups which include the deaf and the deaf blind as well as the sighted that pay regular visits to the Touch Gallery this year. William Rowland's deep interest in the arts, his refined critical faculties as well as his own lack of physical sight have been invaluable to Touch Gallery development. He has always made anything seem possible.

The Touch Gallery is ideally situated at ground level adjacent to an ample parking area. The rooms are high ceilinged and light and close to essential washing and toilet facilities. Works of art are securely attached to pedestals which are in turn anchored to the floor. A free-standing pedestal for three-dimensional works is favoured because it allows the guide to stand behind the work being discussed. There is room for the simultaneous guidance of the hands of two blind people and their reactions can more easily be assessed. Rubber matting encircles the base of the pedestal at a width of one metre. It contrasts with the wooden floor elsewhere and provides a



VI



VII

tactile and auditory warning of the proximity of a work of art. Works are identified by labels in both braille and sighted type. In the Dark Room sighted labels consist of photographic negatives in light boxes.

Layout of exhibitions is simplified and logical. A relief map at the entrance does aid orientation and allow for independent viewing by blind visitors accustomed to the gallery.

During the past decade there have been other galleries mostly in America who have investigated this field. The Tate held its first Sculpture for the Blind exhibition last year. The idea of the blind appreciating art and of galleries seeing a need to extend an invitation to 'Please Touch' (albeit selectively) has taken root and is growing. It has yet to flower.

SANDRA EASTWOOD *Professional Officer* Touch Gallery

het die weg voorberei vir die elf groepe — waaronder ook dowes, doof-blindes en siendes — wat hierdie jaar gereeld besoeke aan die Tasgalery bring. Van die grootste belang vir die ontwikkeling van die Tasgalery was die hulp van William Rowland, self 'n blinde, met sy diepe kunsbelangstelling en verfynde kritiese insig. Hy het alles steeds moontlik laat lyk.

Die Tasgalery is gunstig geleë op die begane grond langs 'n ruim parkeerterrein. Die kamers is lig en het hoë plafonne, en was- en toiletgeriewe is naby. Kunswerke word veilig vasgemaak aan hul voetstukke, wat op hul beurt aan die vloer veranker is. Vrystaande voetstukke word verkies vir drie-dimensionale werke omdat dit die gids in staat stel om agter die werk onder bespreking te staan. Daar is dan ruimte vir die gelyktydige begeleiding van die hande van twee blindes, en hul reaksies kan gemakliker dopgehou word. 'n Rubbermat is tot 'n wydte van een meter rondom al die voetstukke aangebring. Deur sy kontraswerking met die houtvloer elders werk dit as 'n voel- en hoorbare waarskuwing vir die nabyheid van 'n kunswerk. Al die werke word gemerk met byskrifte in sowel Braille- as gewone skrif. In die sg. Donkerkamer bestaan die byskrifte uit fotografiese negatiewe in ligkassies. Die tentoonstellings word op oorsigtelike en logiese wyse opgestel. 'n Reliëf-plattegrond by die ingang help besoekers om hul weg te vind en stel gereelde blinde besoekers in staat om sonder begeleiding rond te beweeg.

Gedurende die afgelope jaar of tien het nog ander kunsmuseums, veral in Amerika, hulle op hierdie terrein begin begewe. Die Tate Gallery het verlede jaar sy eerste tentoonstelling van beeldhoukuns vir blindes gehou. Die gedagte dat ook blindes kuns kan waardeer, en dat kunsmuseums besoekers daarom partykeer behoort uit te nooi om 'Asseblief aan te raak', het wortel geskiet en groei gestadig. Dit sal beslis eendag tot bloei kom.

SANDRA EASTWOOD *Vakkundige Beampte* Tasgalery

An Appreciation

Today, when the museum world is re-thinking its purpose and is, as a consequence, tending to take a broader view of its role in the community, there is an opportunity to widen once more the range of senses employed in the enjoyment and understanding of those works of art and nature which are our trust. There is an opportunity, also, to extend the availability of these treasures to every section of the population. It is part of the general widening of horizons for museums that they are becoming increasingly concerned for people, rather than exclusively for the objects in their care; the focus of attention is shifting from the collections to the community.

In accord with these changes in attitude, sympathetic attention is being given to the physical accessibility of museums, for those who are handicapped by age or infirmity; legislation, relating to the design of such buildings, is seeking to ensure that steps, stairs and other architectural impediments are no longer the insurmountable barriers which once they were. The right of access to information and records, and indeed to every facility and service offered by a museum, including that fundamental communication which flows from the objects themselves, is also being recognised as applicable to all, regardless of personal handicap. Such moves are to be welcomed as refreshing contributions toward the integration, rather than the segregation, of those with special needs.

It is in the context of these changes that the Touch Gallery has for some time been leading the way. From an initial concern for those

'n Waardering

Noudat die museumwêreld vandag besig is om sy funksie te heroorweeg en, as gevolg daarvan, sy rol in die gemeenskap in 'n breër lig begin beskou, bestaan die geleentheid om al die sinne — en nie alleen die gesig nie — in te span vir die genieting van en insig in die kuns- en natuurvoorwerpe wat aan ons sorg toevertrou is. Ook wil ons tans daardie skatte vir alle bevolkingsgroepe bereikbaar maak. Die wyer opvatting wat museums van hul taak begin neem beteken dat hulle steeds meer in mense begin belang stel, en nie net in die museumstukke in hulle sorg nie; hul aandag verskuif van die versameling na die gemeenskap.

In ooreenstemming met hierdie veranderende opvatting word deesdae groot aandag geskenk aan die fisiese bereikbaarheid van museums vir bejaardes en belemmerdes; pogings word in die werk gestel om toe te sien dat trappe en ander argitektoniese hindernisse minder onoorkoomlik gemaak word. Die vrye toegang tot inligting en ander fasiliteite en dienste wat 'n museum kan aanbied — met inbegrip van die hoogs belangrike inligting verskaf deur die museumstukke self — word tans eweneens erken as die reg van almal, ongeag hulle fisiese vermoëns. Alle inisiatiewe in hierdie rigting behoort verwelkom te word as belangrike bydraes tot die inskakeling van mense met spesiale behoeftes by die res van die publiek.

Dit is in verband met hierdie veranderings dat die Tasgalery al geruime tyd 'n baanbrekersrol speel. Uit 'n aanvanklike besorgheid vir dié mense aan wie baie museums onnadenkend weinig aandag

whom many museums unthinkingly exclude, it has developed a philosophy of accessibility which transcends physical access and opens up new levels of aesthetic appreciation. In its understanding provision of facilities which enable all visitors to enjoy, together, the pleasures and revelations of tactile contact with works of art and their constituent materials, and to appreciate the subtle links between music and the sculptural arts, the Touch Gallery has thrown open its doors wider than perhaps any other museum in the world.

The muses are being welcomed back.

H. RAYMOND SINGLETON
Director of Museum Studies
University of Leicester U.K.

bestee, het 'n filosofie van bereikbaarheid ontwikkel wat uitstyg bo fisiese aanraking sonder meer en wat nuwe terreine van estetiese waardering open. Met sy simpatieke voorsiening van fasiliteite wat alle besoekere in staat stel om, saam, die plesier en dieper betekenis te geniet van aanraking deur middel van die tassin van kunswerke en die materiale waaruit hulle bestaan, het die Tasgelery sy deure wyer oopgegooi as miskien enige ander museum ter wêreld.

Die muses word terugverwelkom.

H. RAYMOND SINGLETON
Direkteur van Museumstudies
Universiteit van Leicester V.K.



VIII



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OFFICIAL INSTITUTIONS KNOWN TO HAVE ORGANISED REGULAR OR PERMANENT TACTILE ART EXHIBITIONS

The Touch Gallery is eager to learn of additions to this list

AMPTELIKE INSTELLINGS WAARVAN BEKEND IS DAT HULLE GEREELDE OF PERMANENTE KUNSTENTOONSTELLINGS VIR DIE TASSIN ORGANISEER

Die Tasgalery sal graag verneem van enige toevoegings tot hierdie lys

American Federation of Arts
 41 East 65 Street
 NEW YORK 10021

Brooklyn Museum
 Eastern Parkway
 Brooklyn
 NEW YORK 11238

California Arts Commission
 808 O Street
 Sacramento
 CALIFORNIA 95814

Das Junior Museum und Blindenmuseum
 Museum für Völkerkunde
 Arnimallee 23/27
 1 BERLIN 33 — DAHLEM

Lions Gallery of the Senses
 Wadsworth Atheneum
 Hartford
 CONNECTICUT 06103

Mary Duke Biddle Gallery
 North Carolina Museum of Art
 Raleigh 27601
 NORTH CAROLINA

Moderna Museet
 Skeppshölmen
 STOCKHOLM

Nevil Gallery for the Blind and the Sighted
 University Museum
 33rd and Spruce Streets
 PHILADELPHIA PA. 19104

Philadelphia Museum of Art
 Benjamin Franklin Parkway
 Box 7646
 PHILADELPHIA
 Pennsylvania 19101



Illustrations

Front cover: Winter trees 22 x 35,5 cm, black paper on white board, 11 year old blind scholar.

Frontispiece: Blind child working with clay.

Back cover: Bird 11 x 11 cm, wire, 12 year old blind scholar.

- I **Me eating an apple** ht. 21,5 cm, clay, 19 year old deaf/blind scholar.
- II **Fish** 9 x 16,5 cm, soapstone, adult with minimal light perception.
- III **Balance – positive and negative** 22 x 35 cm, black paper on white board, 12 year old partially sighted scholar.
- IV **Discussion of 'Bird' by Zindoga.**
- V **Bird** ht. 24 cm, clay, 14 year old blind scholar.
- VI **Texture of water of different temperatures** ht. 18,5 cm, clay, 16 year old blind scholar.
- VII **Texture of water of different temperatures** ht. 14,5 cm, clay, 15 year old blind scholar.
- VIII **Flute player** ht. 20 cm, clay, 14 year old deaf/blind scholar.
- IX **Flute player** ht. 24,5 cm, clay, 13 year old blind scholar.
- X **Discovering 'Young Horse' by Mascherini.**

Scholars are drawn from the Athlone School for the Blind and from the School for the Blind, Worcester.

Photographs by Marjorie Bull (S.A. National Gallery) with the exception of the frontispiece and nos. IV, V and X by Chris Jansen.

Plate

Vooromslag: W

11-jarige bli

Titelplaat: Blind

Agteromslag: V

I **Ek eet 'n ap**

II **Vis** 9 x 16,5

III **Balans – po**

12-jarige sw

IV **Bespreking**

V **Voël** h. 24 c

VI **Watertekstu**

16-jarige bli

VII **Watertekstu**

15-jarige bl

VIII **Fluitspeler**

IX **Fluitspeler**

X **Ontdekking**

Leerlinge is van

Worcester

Foto's deur Ma

ring van d

HV1779

T642

GL36

TOUCH GALLERY.

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